

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 06-16-08)

6,734

Shipments received since opening

55,453

Cubic meters of waste disposed

102,451

Containers disposed in the underground

What is a standard waste box?



File photo

A standard waste box (SWB) is one of several types of waste containers used for TRU waste that is shipped to and disposed at WIPP.

First use: WIPP's first waste receipt in March 1999

Capacity: 1.88 cubic meters

Shipping: A TRUPACT-II can carry two SWBs and a HalfPACT can carry one SWB

How many are currently disposed in the WIPP repository: 7,271

WIPP safely completes retrieval effort



File photo: Workers at WIPP emplace contact-handled TRU waste in stacks on the disposal room floor. The recent retrieval effort involved moving nine rows of waste stacks out of the way to reach the waste container to be removed.

After a brief halt in disposal operations to retrieve a drum with an unresolved non-conformance issue, WIPP is back in operation. Shipments were suspended June 6 after discovery by WIPP personnel that a drum containing more than one percent water by container volume was shipped and disposed of at WIPP on May 28.

The 55-gallon drum, containing approximately 1.5 gallons of water, had been placed inside a standard waste box (SWB) for shipment and disposal. Packaged inside the larger SWB, the water content was below the one percent per payload container volume allowed in the WIPP permit.

"The container was safe and compliant underground, but we felt it was better to retrieve it while it was still accessible. We opted to remove it, rather than splitting hairs," said CBFO Manager Dave Moody.

The SWB was disposed underground in Room 3 of disposal panel 4.

"Our crews did a great job," says WTS President and General Manager Farok Sharif. "I applaud their expertise and attention to safety. What they've done is remarkable."

To reach the SWB, crews moved nine rows of waste stacks out of the way. Contact-handled TRU waste is stacked on the disposal room floor, three-levels high and topped by a two-ton super sack of magnesium oxide. With little room to maneuver, pre-planning was crucial to ensure the work was accomplished safely.

DOE Headquarters approved the retrieval plan on June 10 and start-up of retrieval operations began the following day.

"Retrieval began when crews believed they could perform the work safely," said Sharif. "They did it perfectly."

The SWB was returned to the surface June 12, loaded into a TRUPACT-II shipping container and sent back to Los Alamos National Laboratory the same day. It arrived back at LANL June 13.

CBFO and WTS took immediate steps to prevent similar incidents and to ensure issues with non-conforming drums are resolved prior to shipment.

- ⌘ Verified that approximately 2,500 drums certified for shipment, but not yet shipped, are free of any unresolved non-conformances
- ⌘ Instituted multiple administrative reviews of waste container data that included looking for unresolved non-conformances
- ⌘ Adopted the use of a more durable method to affix hold tags to drums identified as having unresolved non-conformance issues

Shipments from LANL to WIPP are expected to resume after a review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Robert Brounstein appointed WTS safety manager

Robert Brounstein is on the job. Brounstein, who began work as the WTS safety manager on June 9, has more than 18 years of experience in safety and industrial hygiene management. In his new role, he is responsible for industrial safety and hygiene, health services and the WIPP laboratories.



"The safety culture of WTS at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is tremendously strong," says WTS President and General Manager Farok Sharif. "Robert joins us with a genuine understanding of the importance of our safety programs and a vision for continuing to set our expectations at the highest level."

Brounstein has a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering from California State Polytechnic University, a Master of Science in health physics from the University of Nevada and a Certificate of Hazardous Materials Management from the University of California.

In his short time at WIPP, Brounstein says he has witnessed an impressive dedication to project goals, which includes safety and health.

"Everyone I have met has impressed me with having a high level of pride in their work," says Brounstein. "People are the ingredient for success. I look forward to meeting everyone and establishing strong working relationships while providing safety and health support which everyone can count on."

Prior to WIPP, Brounstein was a program industrial hygienist and the industrial hygiene task lead for the River Corridor Closure Project in Hanford, Wash. He also worked four years on the Yucca Mountain Project. He is a certified industrial hygienist, a certified safety professional and a certified safety supervisor.

Two other WTS employees have also been appointed to new roles. Tom Ferguson has been appointed as deputy manager, Safety and Health, where he will help coordinate daily activities within WTS Safety and Health.

Bertha Cassingham has been appointed as manager, Safety Programs. In her new role, she will coordinate the Integrated Safety Management System, Voluntary Protection Program and the 10 Code of Federal Regulations 851 Program.

Students awarded scholarships



Pictured above (l to r): Skyler Williams, RJ Tavarez, Juan Gama (Treasurer USW Local 12-9477), Cassandra Munoz and Alysha Cole.

Members of WIPP United Steel Workers Local 12-9477 recently acknowledged the accomplishments of several graduating seniors. Ten high school graduates were each presented with a check to apply toward college tuition, books or other expenses. The students are the children of WIPP union members.

Students who received the checks included Alysha Cole (Larry Cole, Hoisting); Janea-Marie Dickson (John Dickson, Maintenance); Bobby Scott Franco (Bobby Franco, RH Waste Handling); Sheldon Hitchcock (Jerry Hitchcock, CH Waste Handling); Samantha Mendez – (Richard Dominguez, Radiation Control); Cassandra Munoz (Adrian Munoz, Hoisting); RJ Tavarez (Ray Tavarez, CH Waste Handling); Audryanna Utter (William Utter, RH Waste Handling); Skyler Williams (Jody Williams, Radiation Control), and Rogelio Ybarra (Roy “Bunny” Ybarra, UG Maintenance).

Submitted by Jody Williams, WTS

Interested in WIPP?

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Safety speaker to visit WIPP

On June 18, WIPP employees, both at the WIPP site and the SWB, will have a chance to hear guest speaker John Drebinger talk about safety.



John Drebinger

For over 14 years, Drebinger has used fun, magic, stories, group participation and effective communication and motivational skills to help people work toward achieving zero injuries. His story of how he went from being a fan of our nation's space program to actually being on board three of our space shuttles has inspired thousands of professionals to use the same successful techniques to revitalize their careers by helping others to work safely.

Drebinger's list of clients say they have never learned as much about safety from anyone in such a short period of time. This uniquely qualifies him as an expert in the arena of creating fun, effective, entertaining and, most importantly, informative presentations.

Drebinger is a member of the prestigious Hollywood Magic Castle and captivates audiences with enchanting performances while leading them to take charge of their lives and to take personal responsibility for their own safety and for others. Drebinger will enlighten employees on new ways to enhance and reinforce WIPP's already distinguished safety program.

Drebinger will hold three sessions:

9:00 a.m. – Skeen-Whitlock Building – Weart Auditorium
12:30 p.m. – WIPP Site – G&S Auditorium
2:00 p.m. – WIPP Site – G&S Auditorium

Life saving training



Can you save a life? The WIPP Training Department recently offered a class on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED).

At left, Ellen Harkness and Helen Nations practice new skills as part of the training session.

Congratulations to everyone who chose to participate in this important training.

The U.S. Department of Energy
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

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